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MARTHA'S
HOME

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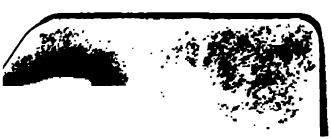

MARTHA AND MRS. BURKE.

Page 37.

MARTHA'S HOME

A TALE FOR THE YOUNG

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

T. NELSON & SONS · LONDON

MARTHA'S HOME,

AND

How the Sunshine came into it.

BY F. M. S.,

AUTHOR OF "HOPE ON; OR, THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT."

"Do to-day's duty—look not on,
Work while there's strength and light;
The day's toil is enough to bear,
And then there cometh night.

"Enough that He in whom you live,
Is with you if you fall,
And giveth help, and hope, and heart,
And patience to prevail."

Thoughts in Verse for the Hardworking and Suffering.

LONDON:
T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW;
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CONTENTS

MARTHA'S HOME—

	Page
I. The Clouds Arise	7
II. How Martha Ruled	20
III. "A Friend in Need is a Friend indeed"	31
IV. Eddy in Mischief	42
V. "A Soft Answer turneth away Wrath"	51
VI. Repentance, and what came of it	58
VII. The Day of Trouble	66
VIII. "Clear Shining after Rain"	79
THE LONG NIGHT	88
LITTLE AGNES GREEN	102
GRANDMOTHER'S STORY	113

MARTHA'S HOME.

I.

The Clouds Arise.

"Think of the happy dead,
Gone to their Sabbath rest,
The burden of their life laid down,
Now and for ever blest."

Thoughts in Verse.

MR. GLEGSON was a rich merchant, and his house was one of those pretty suburban villas which abound in the neighbourhood of most of our mercantile towns.

Mrs. Glegson was entertaining company in the drawing-room; her children were amusing themselves in their spacious play-room; and in her kitchen an animated conversation was being

carried on between her cook and kitchen-maid, the latter a girl, whom she had got from a training school two years before.

"Mrs. Burke," said Martha, looking up from the duster she was hemming, "I don't see why a girl shouldn't try to better herself, if she can."

"Nor do I," replied the cook, who was making pastry; "but I don't think girls *do* better themselves by changing their places continually. What makes you dissatisfied here, Martha?"

"I'm not dissatisfied; only, I think I should like to be something above a kitchen-maid," she answered hesitatingly.

"I suppose you think yourself too good for that kind of work?" said Mrs. Burke rather scornfully.

"Not exactly that; but I should like to have higher wages, and—"

"And what? speak out, Martha."

"You have always been kind to me, *Mrs. Burke,* but—"

"But you don't like being under any one—that's the truth. Now, Martha Wilson, listen to me. I know we can't put old heads on young shoulders, but believe the words of a woman old enough to be your mother; it's a safer and easier thing, by far, to be ruled than to rule."

Martha said something under her breath about obeying a mistress being a different thing.

Mrs Burke was much too good-natured to take offence; she quite understood her feelings, and only answered quietly,—

"Well, Martha, my mother was a sensible woman, and when I was first going out to service, she said she would rather I went as kitchen-maid than anything else, because, she said, the feeling of an eye being constantly upon me in the kitchen, would do me more good than to receive orders from a mistress who could not stand by to see them carried out. No, no, Martha, I say, *happy* those who are under some one."

"Well, Mrs. Burke, I don't think so. I know many people have got to be under others, but, for my own part, I'd rather not."

Good Mrs. Burke shook her head, and went on rolling out her paste in silence for a few minutes; then she said,—

"Martha, my girl, I hope you will not know for a long time what it is to have no one to give you orders. God means our whole life to teach us how to obey; and He puts others over us that, by practising obedience to them, we may learn to do His will in all things."

There was something very earnest in the way in which Mrs. Burke always spoke of religion; it was as if her whole heart was in what she said.

"Martha; some one wants to speak to you at the back-door," said Anne, the housemaid, entering the kitchen at this *moment;* and Martha laid her work down *hastily and* went to the door, where a

ragged boy of eleven or twelve years of age was standing.

"I's come after you, Martha, for mother's a-dying," were his only words.

The colour faded from Martha's cheeks, and she leaned against the door for support; she could hardly speak, but grasping her little brother's hand, she managed to say,—

"O Dick! not dying? tell me she's not dying!"

"I tell you she be; and if you don't look sharp you won't see her alive. Don't get so white, put on your bonnet, and come along."

It was the work of an instant with Martha, to return to the kitchen and tell the sad news to the cook; then, wrapping her shawl around her, and tying on her bonnet, she hurried away with her brother.

How long the minutes seemed as they walked through the muddy streets, until they came to the narrow court in which *was situated* Martha's home! but they

were there at last, and she opened the door, and entered the room, which served as kitchen and sitting-room.

There was a cry from all the children, who were huddled together on the floor, but Martha heeded them not, she was thinking only of her who was lying in the inner chamber. Was she in time? Would she get one smile, one blessing from the being whom she loved best on earth? Yes; as she bent over the bed, and put her face close to that of her dying mother, she could catch the whispered words,—

"I'm very happy now, Martha; I know I'm forgiven for Christ's sake—" Martha pressed her lips on the forehead, upon which the cold dews of death were gathering, though she could not speak for crying; but her mother spoke again,—

"Be a good girl to father, Martha; he'll want some one to keep things straight. God bless you, child." These were her last words, and ere an hour had elapsed, she was dead.

Martha went round to the other side of the bed, and knelt down beside her father, who was seated there with his head buried in his hands.

"Father," she whispered, "dear father, I will be a good daughter to you."

The man took no notice, except to mutter to himself, "Ah, Sally! I might have been kinder to you. God forgive me!"

"Has she been long ill, father?"

"Yes; but she wouldn't mind it; she went about her work the same as ever, and I didn't know how bad she was."

"Did she suffer much?"

"Look at her face and you can tell," replied the man gruffly.

Martha gazed earnestly on the still, white face. Yes; those deep lines and furrows upon the forehead, those sunken features, and that calm, settled look of pain about the mouth told the old tale of a lingering death, brought on by anxiety.

poverty, and want, coming upon a frame exhausted and worn out with unceasing toil,—that death which removes so many from the battle-field of life, where they have struggled on bravely for the sake of the dear ones around them.

"Ay," said the father more kindly, "I hope you may never have to bear as much, my girl; come in now, and get some tea."

Martha knew that it would do him good to bring him out of that room, so she followed him into the other.

Coming from a gentleman's house, where she had been accustomed to see everything neat, clean, and comfortable, it was a strange sight that met her eyes.

A smouldering fire lighted the grate; but it could hardly be said to give warmth to the room. A rickety table stood in the centre, and some broken chairs were scattered about in various directions. There was no carpet on the dirty floor, *which was* covered with rubbish; the paper

hung in shreds on the wall; the cupboard door was open, and the contents plainly visible,—some cracked and dirty plates and dishes, and a few broken crusts of bread in a brown dish.

It certainly looked very dreary and uninviting, but Martha was too sad to think much about it, only she felt her heart sink within her, and the weight upon it became heavier than before. How could she give up a comfortable place, to settle down in this miserable room? But she had not much time for thinking about it, for the children clamoured round her, all delighted at the novelty of having her amongst them again.

"What a pretty frock you've got on, Martha," they exclaimed, for her clean cotton dress was a great contrast to their own ragged ones.

"Hush, dears; don't talk of that now; do you know that God has taken mother up *to heaven*," and Martha took little Willie,

the youngest child, on her lap and hid her face on his shoulder.

"Up to heaven! is that the happy place, Martha?"

"Yes, dear."

"Who'll do for us now?" asked Dick, bending over a stick which he was cutting, that no one might see the tears which filled his eyes.

"Martha will," replied his father, who had not spoken before.

"Yes! Martha will," repeated little Willie, nestling closer to her.

"Well, I hope Martha will get this place a bit more comfortable, for it hasn't been so since poor mother got bad," said Ben, the eldest boy.

"And get me some new shoes," said Lucy, a girl of eleven, looking down at those which hardly covered her feet, and were full of holes. "I can go back to the factory now, can't I, father? Martha will *do the work.*"

"Yes," said her father, "you may go back as soon as you like."

"How many of you work in the factory?" asked Martha.

"Only Dick and I," answered Lucy.

"And what does Ben do?"

"Oh, I'm errand-boy at Smith's," replied Ben.

"And Willie stays at home?"

"Yes, and Eddy too."

"Ah, yes, I forgot Eddy. Where is he?"

"I don't know; he was here a minute ago. But he's so sulky and cross, we like his room better than his company," said Dick.

"Poor Eddy!" and Martha sighed as she thought of the little cripple, who had been loved best of all by the mother who was gone.

Bed-time soon came; and before she went up to the garret which she was to share with Lucy, Martha went into her *mother's room.*

She opened the door noiselessly, and crept in; but some one was there before her, for the moonlight, which streamed in at the window, fell on the face of the dead and on that of her little crippled brother Eddy. The boy did not hear her light footstep, nor did he raise his head, which was resting on the bed. He was crying bitterly, and Martha was so frightened at the violence of his grief, that she could not speak to him. At last she heard him say something in a low, broken voice, as he raised the cold hand which lay beside him. "Mother! O mother, speak to me! Tell me you'll not go away! Oh, I will be good! If you leave me, I shall have nobody to love me! He paused for an answer; and then receiving none, he said again, in a voice of sorrow which pierced Martha's heart, "Mother, dear mother, *do* speak to me!" Martha went up quietly *to him,* and laying her hand gently on his *shoulder,* she whispered, "Eddy!"

MARTHA AND EDDY.

Page 19.

The little boy raised his face. O how white and wan it was!

"Eddy, mother is in heaven now; she cannot hear you speak to her."

"Oh, she must hear me. She *always* listened to me before."

"But she can't now, Eddy, because God has taken her away."

"And will she never come back?"

"No; but if you ask the Lord Jesus Christ, He will take you to be with her some day."

"But there is no one to love me now."

"*I* will, Eddy;" and she drew him tenderly into her arms, and kissed him almost as fondly as his mother had done. Eddy looked up into her face, and there seemed to be something there which he could trust, for by degrees his sobs became less violent; and bidding his sister good night quietly, he went up to his bed.

Both the brother and sister cried themselves to sleep that night.

II.

How Martha Ruled.

"Who seeks in weakness an excuse,
His sins will vanquish never."

MARTHA gave up her situation, and with a brave heart began her home duties. Her father put everything under her care; and her head was full of the changes which she would make in those dingy and uncomfortable rooms, and how she would be as good a daughter and as good a sister as even her dying mother could have wished.

She thought how pleasant it would be to control the rest of the family—how she would labour and toil for them—and how they would look up to her, and be grateful *for all her* trouble.

"Yes, mother," she would sometimes whisper, as she lay awake hour after hour, thinking over her plans, "I can never fill your place, but I *will* do my best not to let the children feel your loss."

But to rule was not so easy as poor Martha had imagined; and a day spent in her home, six months after her mother's death, will show us this.

Wearied out, she had gone to bed at a late hour; and, still weary, she awoke in the morning. The daylight was streaming into her room; and as she heard a neighbouring clock strike, she sprang from her bed, frightened to think how long she had slept, dressed herself anyhow, and administering a hearty shake to Lucy, who was still sleeping, hurried down stairs. There *was* a time when she would not have left her room without kneeling down to implore her heavenly Father's care and direction throughout the day; but now she never thought of this, "she had too much to do."

Her father, with an angry frown upon his forehead, was kneeling by the fire, which he was endeavouring to light.

"Late again, Martha. Time was when my breakfast was ready for me at a proper time, but now things are changed."

Martha took no notice of this speech, except muttering something to herself which could not be heard.

"Come and light this fire," said David Wilson, getting up; "the sticks are damp."

Martha knelt down by the grate, and succeeded in raising a flame; but the room quickly filled with smoke.

The children came tumbling in, one after another, not one of them looking half-awake, and all only half-washed and dressed.

"No breakfast ready?" said Ben; "and it's time for me to be off. It's too bad."

Martha hastily put a dirty cloth on the *table,* and laid the remains of a loaf of *bread and* some salt butter upon it.

"The kettle will boil presently, Ben."

"O yes! it's always *presently*," replied the boy, cutting a large slice of bread.

"What are you crying for, Eddy?" asked Martha, looking up, as the cripple came in sobbing.

"Dick hit me," whimpered the little boy.

"You're always making a fuss about something," said the sister crossly.

Eddy checked the sobs which were rising in his throat, and with a sullen look sat down by the table; but he did not taste anything.

Willie ran in, saying that he was cold; and, indeed, his ragged little frock did not look as if it had much power of keeping him warm.

"Why don't you dress that poor child in something warmer, Martha?" said the father, looking with pity at his favourite child.

"You know as well as I do that we

have got no money to do it," replied Martha, angrily.

"I know that there would be plenty if you managed properly."

Martha's face grew darker; and she muttered, "I wish I had left you all to manage for yourselves. I was well enough off before I came here. Willie, keep your hands off the loaf, will you!"

Her father then desired her to put up his dinner for him, for he was not able to come back in the middle of the day, as he was engaged as a porter in one of the large warehouses in the city.

Martha cut two or three thick slices of bread, and brought out of the cupboard some dry cheese, which she folded up in a piece of newspaper.

"Your poor mother used to give me a change sometimes—either some slices of bacon or bits of meat. I get tired of cheese every day," said her father.

"*I've* not got money to buy either bacon

or any other meat," said Martha again; but her father had left the room before she had finished her sentence.

As soon as the children had gone off to their work, Martha sat down in the untidy, undusted, and smoky room, to patch a coat of Ben's.

Eddy and Willie were quarrelling at the far end of the room.

"Eddy," cried Martha, "what are you about?"

"Nothing," replied the little boy.

"Don't make such a noise then."

They were quieter for a moment or two. Then they began again, and a scream from Willie drew Martha's attention. She got up from her work, went over to them, boxed their ears, and with a rough shake sent them both out of the room.

In a few minutes they were at play in the street, with all those other ragged and forlorn little urchins who are turned out there by women, who are either too lazy

or too busy to attend to them. If Martha could have known that Eddy was learning to pilfer and tell lies, and that Willie's baby lips were framing themselves to utter oaths that would have shocked her ears had she heard them, she would not have thus carelessly thrust them into the way of temptation; but she was too busy to think of this.

She had her wish fulfilled now; she had no one to obey. But her life was not what she had fancied it would be. The burden was heavier than she could bear, and she would gladly have laid it down.

As the last sound of the little boys' footsteps died away, Martha's head was bowed on her hands, and one or two long, deep sighs broke the silence of the room. She did not cry; she seldom did so now; but her mind was full of bitter thoughts. Why was all her young life to be ground down *in this* way? Why was there none of the *bright*ness and joyousness of girlhood in

her lot? Why was she to be blamed, and scolded, and unloved, while others were petted and given all they could desire? It was very, very hard. And then she raised her head again, and her fingers moved rapidly over her work. Poor Martha!

Twelve o'clock came, and the children assembled for their dinner. Martha got out the loaf, and some cold potatoes, which was all that there was for them.

Dick and Lucy came in; a few grumbling words about the uncomfortable state of the room passed, and Martha's heart was heavier than before.

As soon as she was alone again, she went into her mother's room, and opened a drawer in which she had laid all the articles of dress which belonged to her. Alas! they were very few, and much the worse for wear; but there was one gown, which was tolerably respectable, and Martha unfolded it, and looked at it long and sorrowfully; then, rolling it into a small

bundle, she put on her own bonnet and shawl, and hurried down the street until she reached a shop, which she entered. A few minutes after, she came out, with flushed cheeks and a quick step, holding something tightly in her hand.

"There goes Martha Wilson," said one of the neighbours; "so she's come to it at last, with all her fine ways when she came here."

"Come to what?" asked the friend, who had looked in for a few minutes' gossip, with her baby in her arms.

"To what you and I came to long ago, neighbour," replied the woman, with a bitter smile; "the pawnbroker's shop."

The other sighed; "It's a bad place, and it's like taking spirits, I always think; it seems to brighten one up a bit at the time, and then leaves one worse than before."

"Poor Mrs. Wilson, she's a sad miss to *those* children!"

"Yes; it goes to my heart to see them going about in rags; and that little Willie, he looks *so* miserable, and swears as badly as any man in the court."

"It's hard work for that poor girl; ay, it's a hard life for many of us, poor folk. God knows we've a weary time of it, and few to care—but I must go, neighbour."

Meanwhile, Martha was disposing of the money she had got; a few red herrings, a loaf of bread, and some candles soon ran away with it all, but Martha gave no thought to the morrow,—she was content that there would be some supper for her father when he came in, and that she would escape any rough words for that night.

An evening passed in darning Willie's frock, in scolding the children, and in sighing over the hardness of her lot, ended the day which was only one of the many that were spent in Martha's home. It was no wonder that as the tired girl laid her

head on her pillow she said to herself, "Must it always last? am I never to have any more happiness? Things seem to get worse every day, and I don't know what to do! O mother! mother!"

III.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

"A man, who on his journey home
Has taken the wrong way,
Does not persist in going on
The wrong road all the day

He turns right round, however steep
The homeward path may be;
And keeps on steadfast to the end,
And a wise *man is he.*"

Thoughts in Verse.

"TADDY, why do you stay moping up here? go off and play with Willie," said Martha, one day, as she noticed the cripple leaning against the window, and gazing through the dirty panes of glass.

"I don't want to go out in the street," replied the little boy, without looking round.

"Well, I can't have you here; I am going *to sweep* the room."

Eddy did not move. Martha took no more notice for a few moments, and then said sharply, "Eddy, be off!" But still he did not go.

At last his sister went over to him, shook him roughly, and opening the door, she pushed him out.

(O Martha! Martha! why did you not find something for him to do, and put him in the next room, until you had done sweeping? You little know how bitterly you will repent your hastiness—you cannot see the look of anger and pain which is passing over the boy's face—you cannot hear his muttered words, "Well, then, I don't care now; I'll go and do it,"—and you do not know that Joe Sparks, the worst boy in the court, is waiting and watching for him. But a little patience on your part might have saved him!)

Martha began sweeping. The dust flew about in every direction, and she tried to *open* the window, but it had stuck fast,

and the consequence was that the dust only changed its position instead of being dispersed.

She was interrupted in her employment by hearing a knock at her door, and on turning her head round, her eyes met those of her friend Mrs. Burke.

"Does Martha Wilson live in this house?" she said, as she advanced into the room.

"Mrs. Burke?—yes, here I am," and Martha threw down her broom, and hurried over to her.

"*You* Martha Wilson?" said Mrs. Burke, looking with astonishment at the figure before her, "I can't believe it?"

"I daresay not," said Martha sorrowfully, as her eyes dropped beneath the gaze of her friend, "I am changed since you saw me last;" and with the corner of her ragged apron she began dusting a chair for her visitor, and invited her to sit *down.*

Mrs. Burke did so in silence, and she did not speak for some time. Her quick eyes glanced round the room, and seemed to take in the state of everything in an instant. At last she said, rather sharply,—

"You were sweeping, Martha, weren't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Burke; but it doesn't matter."

"That dust that you've been raising is all settling again upon the chairs and tables. Hadn't you better open the window?"

"It has stuck," said Martha, as she hastily tried to close the cupboard door which had no fastening; but her attempt was useless, and the contents were more plainly visible than before.

Mrs. Burke went over to the window, and succeeded at last in forcing it open. In came the pleasant fresh air, which was *so* seldom admitted to that gloomy room.

The good woman drew a long breath of

satisfaction as she felt the cool breeze against her cheek, and then she turned to Martha.

"Well, my girl, and how have you been getting on?"

Martha's only answer was an ashamed glance at her dirty and ragged dress, and at the state of the room.

Mrs. Burke laid her hand upon the young girl's, and said quietly,—

"You've been having a hard time of it, Martha?"

Martha turned her face away and replied, "Rather hard."

"And you've had nobody to help you?"

"No; I didn't want any one."

Mrs. Burke knew that this was not true, for one glance at the girl's tired and careworn face told her how the case stood.

"Poor child," she said kindly.

The words were so gently spoken, that they quite overcame the pride in which *Martha had* wrapped herself, and she laid

her head down on the table, and fairly sobbed aloud. "O Mrs. Burke, indeed I *have* tried to keep everything right, but it's no good, and I'm not going to try any more!"

"You are not happy, Martha?"

"No; indeed I'm not. Father's always cross with me, and he says I waste the money, and that I can't do anything, and the children hate me."

"Nonsense, child; don't talk like that. There is a bright side to almost everything, so now let's look for the bright side of your troubles. Are things so bad, that they couldn't be worse, Martha?"

"No; I don't think they could be."

"Supposing your father had no work, and that none of your brothers could earn anything, wouldn't that be worse? Or if you were in bad health, or some of the children were ill, what would you do then? O Martha! you have *some* things to be thankful for."

But in answer to this, Martha poured out such a list of troubles, that Mrs. Burke hardly knew where to begin to set them to rights.

"This room is not so bad as you make out, Martha, it is a good size and gets the morning sun, if it were but clean, and well aired. Do keep the windows open; you don't know how much the fresh air helps to make a room healthy and cheerful."

"But I can't get the room clean, Mrs. Burke."

"Have you tried, my dear?"

"Yes; I have *tried* to do everything."

Mrs. Burke paused for a minute, and then said earnestly, "Martha, have you asked your Father in heaven to help you to do your work rightly?"

"I used to ask Him," replied Martha, looking down uneasily.

"But do you ask Him every day;—did *you ask Him* this morning?"

"No."

"Or yesterday?"

"No."

"Or all last week, or the week before?"

Martha shook her head.

"Then, my dear, you cannot expect to get on right. Will you let me be your friend and try to help you, Martha?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, promise that you won't let this day pass without going to Him, telling Him all the care and trouble you have, and asking Him to teach you how to do His will in every act of your daily life. Martha, He is the *only* friend you can lean upon for help and strength."

"But it's such a long time since I said my prayers!"

"Never mind that, it's all the more reason you should do so now. Tell Him that as well as the rest, and ask Him to forgive *you for* your Saviour's sake."

Martha leaned her head upon her hands

for a few minutes, and then looking up with a brighter face, she said heartily,—

"I will do it, Mrs. Burke, and now please tell me what I can do to this room."

"Well, Martha," replied her friend smiling, "don't sweep it with the window and doors shut up, I think you could scrub it thoroughly,—couldn't you?—and wash the walls, and sweep the cobwebs off the ceiling; none of that is very hard, is it?

"No, but the chimney smokes."

"Well, I think I can get that cured for you."

"Thank you; but the furniture is so bad, I don't know how to make it look neat."

Mrs. Burke was almost inclined to say that she did not either, but, after a few minutes' consideration, she replied,—

"Don't you think that you could coax one of your brothers to do some little bits of carpentering for you. For instance, to *mend that* cupboard-door, it only wants a

little fastening put on it, and I'm sure your food would be kept much cleaner, if the dust and ashes, and smoke didn't get to it. And then, Martha, as I'm an old friend you won't mind my saying, that one thing which would make your room look much better, would be if you could manage to keep clean and tidy yourself."

"Yes, Mrs. Burke, I know that. Father used to say he didn't mind how plain his supper was, when he saw me looking tidy. But all my nice frocks got worn out, and I cut up some for the children, and I had no money to get more, and by degrees I left off caring whether I was tidy or clean, I had no time to think about that."

"But you must try to think about it, Martha, and I will help you. My husband and I have left service, and have set up a baker's business in Temple Street, close to you, so I can see you often. We have talked enough to-day, and you won't forget what I've said, so now good-bye;

mend that great tear in your frock, make your hair neat, and clean yourself before your father comes home, and get something for supper with this," and she slipped a small coin into Martha's hand, and, kissing her warmly on both cheeks, went away.

God will reward you, honest Mrs. Burke, for the work of love which you have been doing in Martha's home—you have been fulfilling His own injunction, "We, then, that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves . . . . . for even Christ pleased not Himself."

IV.

Eddy in Mischief.

"Pilfer not the smallest thing,
Touch it not, howe'er thou need it;
Though the owner have enough,
Though he know it not, nor need it.

Upright heart, and honest name,
To the poorest are a treasure;
Better than ill-gotten wealth,
Better far than pomp or pleasure."

Hymns for Little Children.

AND where was Eddy all this time? Sorrowfully and slowly the little cripple had left the house and limped down the court, occasionally lifting his hand to his eyes to wipe away the tears which dimmed them.

Willie was playing at pitch and toss with some other little urchins as ragged and *dirty as* himself; and, as Eddy seated him-

self on the step of a neighbour's door, he heard a fearful oath come from his little brother's lips; but the lame boy was too well accustomed to this kind of language to take much notice of it. He had not been sitting there long before he was joined by Joe Sparks, a boy about two years older than himself, who was dressed very shabbily, and had a most mean and cunning expression in his face.

"Oh, there you are, Ted, I's been watching this long time for you."

"What do you want?" asked Eddy sullenly.

"Do you forget what you promised to do, lad?" inquired Joe.

Eddy looked down uneasily, and then replied, "Joe, I'd rather not do it."

"Nonsense," said Joe, "what has made you turn chicken-hearted; I did not think you such a fool."

"I'm afraid it's bad work, and we're sure to be found out."

"Not a bit of it."

"Why won't you do it, Joe? You know you could get away so much quicker than me."

"Well, Ted, don't you see, the magistrates, they knows me of old; and their worships told me last time, that when they had the pleasure of seeing me again before them, they'd give me two years in the Reformatory, and I happens to prefer living at large just at present."

"But, if it's so bad, I don't think we ought to go and do it, Joe."

"Stuff," said Joe, impatiently; "but, if you're such a coward, I'll get another chap to come. I thought you'd like a few coppers for yourself."

"So I should," said little Eddy wistfully.

"Well, come along then. I saw old Sykes this morning, and he has promised to buy whatever we can get. Now, you *know* what you're to do. I'll go into the

yard and speak to the men, and you must lay hands on all the long nails and pieces of tin, which you can get—the more the better."

All this time they had been walking slowly down the street, but suddenly Eddy looked up in Joe's face, and said,—

"Joe, won't it make God angry, if we steal; won't He send us to hell?"

Joe started, for one instant he paused—a frightened, almost terrified look came over his countenance, and seizing Eddy's arm, he muttered, "He don't watch such little chaps as we, does He?"

"Mother said He watched us all."

Joe stood in silence for a few moments, then, with an uneasy laugh, he said roughly, "Don't talk such rubbish; come along; have you turned good? You're afraid of the peeler, that's it."

"I'm not," said Eddy, though his heart inwardly quaked, and his face became paler than usual, at the thought of the dangerous

risk he was about to run. But now they had reached the end of the long alley, and in another moment they had turned the corner and were out of sight.

Meanwhile, Martha had mended the great rent in her dress, after a fashion, had made herself neater than she had been for many a long day, had swept up the ashes in the grate, and had dusted the table. This all took some time, and when it was done, she put on her bonnet and shawl and went out to get her father's supper.

As she walked along, she thought how she could most judiciously spend the shilling which Mrs. Burke had given her. "Red herrings? no! they make us thirsty, and I don't think they are very nourishing; a small bit of meat and a loaf, that'll be best. I have heard say a very small quantity of meat goes further towards nourishment than anything else;" and having got what she wanted she turned her *steps homeward*, with a lighter heart, and a

brighter face than she had had since her mother's death. Humbled, she felt indeed, when she remembered how imperfectly she had performed her home work, but yet there seemed to be a light dawning in the future. She *would* seek for strength, where she knew it was to be found—she *would* cast her burden on the Lord, and ask Him to bear it for her; and these resolutions brought back the hope which had nearly died out in her heart. She looked up from the noisy bustling street into the calm blue sky above her, and thanked God that she still had the opportunity of doing something to brighten her home; whispering a prayer that He would forgive her the past for her Saviour's sake, and help her for the time to come; and there came into her mind a verse which she had heard long ago: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee."

But her happy thoughts were inter-

rupted, as she saw a crowd of people coming down the street, and she shrunk from getting into it.

"What is the matter?" she asked of two women, who were standing by a doorway looking out.

"They say it's the police taking some chaps to the lock-up."

"Poor fellows," said Martha, but she felt that if there were policemen near she would be quite safe in going on. And she was doing so, hardly raising her eyes from the ground, when a bitter cry fell on her ear, and she heard her own name uttered in the most piercing accents.

"O Martha, Martha, save me!"

She looked up, and saw her little crippled brother being led by one policeman, while another followed dragging Joe Sparks, who was making violent efforts to escape.

Martha's face became deadly pale, and she trembled from head to foot. "Eddy

Eddy," she cried, forcing her way through the crowd to his side.

"Out of the way, young woman, you must not stop the prisoner," said the policeman.

"But it's Eddy, it's my own brother. Oh, there is some mistake, indeed there is!"

"No mistake in the fact that I found these young chaps stealing nails and tin, and so I'm taking them to the lock-up."

"Oh, it cannot be true; Eddy, speak; tell me it isn't true."

He burst into tears. "It *is* true, but I'll never do it again."

"There, *now*, get out of the way, young woman, you've got your answer."

Martha covered her eyes, and turned mournfully away; but when Eddy saw her going, he stretched out his hand, seized her dress, and cried bitterly and imploringly: "If *you* hadn't made me go out, I shouldn't have stole. Oh, do not leave me now!—*save me, save* me, Martha."

But the policeman snatched his hand away, pushed Martha aside, and pulled his prisoner forward.

The sight seemed to leave the poor girl's eyes, everything swam before her, and she staggered on for a few steps, vainly holding out her hands towards Eddy, as her little brother's bitter cry again fell upon her ears; but she would have fallen to the ground had not an elderly man stepped through the crowd, and bidding her lean on him, supported her to his shop, which was close by.

"Why, it's Martha!" said a kind voice by her side as she entered, and crying out, "Eddy, O my brother!" she fell insensible into the arms of Mrs. Burke.

V.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath."

"Forget not thou hast often sinned,
And sinful yet must be;
Deal gently with the erring one
As God has dealt with thee."
Heart Music.

WHEN Martha came to herself, she found that she was lying in the little parlour at the back of Mrs. Burke's shop; while the kind-hearted woman was bathing her face with vinegar.

A dim sense of misery crept over the poor girl as she regained recollection, and at last the dreadful scene which she had witnessed a few minutes before, camé back upon her in vivid reality.

"Save him! oh, save him!" she faintly murmured.

"I cannot do so yet, my dear," answered Mrs. Burke kindly. "He will be tried at the Police Court to-morrow, and then we will see what we can do; but to-night he must sleep in the lock-up, and it will do him no harm."

"Oh, he is so weak and so sickly, it may kill him; and it was all my fault—all mine."

"What do you mean, child?" said Mrs. Burke, gently forcing her back into the chair from which she had sprung in her excitement.

"Oh, he said it, and it is quite true."

"What is true?"

"He wanted to stay at home with me this morning, and I made him go out into the street; and if I hadn't, he wouldn't have met that wicked Joe. What shall I do?"

"You can't do anything now, my dear, except to bear it patiently. You will *never forget* it, and I think it will be a

lesson for your little brother—perhaps the turning point in his life. Rest now, Martha, and we will do all we can for him to-morrow."

"May I go to the court-house in the morning?"

"Better not," said Mr. Burke, who had stepped in from the shop. "I will go, but it is not a nice place for young girls, and you could do no good. Depend on it, I will let you know about him as soon as possible." And with this promise, poor Martha was obliged to be content.

She was better now, and thought she would rather go home; so Mrs. Burke accompanied her, and as she parted from her at her own door, she said, kindly, "Take this trouble where you promised to take the others, even to Him who never sent a weary or heavy laden one away uncomforted."

Martha only bowed her head in reply, but she did what her friend advised; and *then, having* left her burden with the

Lord, she set about her work with a lightened heart, though she very much dreaded her father's return. But he had heard the sad news on his way home, from some of those busy-bodies who are to be found in courts and alleys as well as in squares and terraces, always ready to talk about matters which do not concern them, and which they generally make worse by repetition.

"What is this, Martha?" he said, sternly, as he entered the room, and saw the pale face and swollen eyelids of his daughter; "what's all this about Eddy?"

"O father, father, don't be angry; Eddy has been taking something that wasn't his, and the police have carried him off to the lock-up; but he is so young. Don't be angry, father. Mr. Burke—that's the new baker in Temple Street—says he will go to the police-court to-morrow, and get him *off if he can.* Father, don't look like that, *please* don't."

But David Wilson's anger was roused. Poor though he was, he was scrupulously honest, and the thought of the disgrace brought upon his name and character by this behaviour of his son, caused him to vent his displeasure upon the first person who came near him.

"The young rascal!—but he shall rue it—he shan't come in here again, or if he does, I'll break every bone in his body."

"O father, father," cried Martha, in an agony coming up to him, "don't say that. It was my fault, I sent him out, I would not let him stop in with me—*I* put him in the way of temptation," and she looked into his face imploringly.

"You did, did you?" and his angry eyes almost terrified her, but still she answered firmly—

"Yes, I did."

David Wilson paused for an instant, and then his anger turned on his daughter.

"*Alack* for the day that your mother

died. Nothing has gone right since—the house has gone to rack and ruin, you're cross to the children and lead them into all that is wrong; you spend all the money you can, and we never see the good of it, aud everything as dirty as it can be. But there shall be a change, things shan't last like this," and he struck his hand violently on the table.

The day before, Martha would have answered passionately, but now she was too saddened and humbled to do so, she merely bowed her head upon her hands, rested them on the table, and her slight frame shook with the violence of her sobs. Her father's heart was softened. If she had spoken angrily in reply, he would have been provoked to say more; but the meek acquiescence of the words which she uttered amidst her tears, "Yes, father, it is all-true —quite true, but it *shall* not be so long, I *am going* to try"—touched him; and after *watching* her for a few moments, he said,

"I've been hard upon you, child, I was hard upon her too, but she asked me not to be so on the children," and he laid his hand on hers.

She raised her tearful face for an instant, and said, eagerly, "Father, I don't mind what you say to me, I deserve it all; but forgive him, forgive Eddy, he is so weak and young."

"But for *my* son to be a *thief!*"

A sudden thought darted into Martha's mind, and putting her hand on his arm, she said in a low earnest voice, "He was mother's son too, and her pet."

Her father started. "It's true; yes, Martha, it's true; and for *her* sake, the boy shall be forgiven."

"And you'll be kind to him, and not let the others plague him?"

"Yes, I will. Now, go and get me my tea."

VI.

Repentance, and what came of it.

"Think kindly of the erring
Oh, do not thou forget,
However darkly stained by sin
He is thy brother yet.
Oh, kindly *help* the erring!
Thou yet may'st lead him back,
With gracious words, and tones of love,
From misery's thorny track."

Heart Music.

MRS. BURKE came over early in the morning to let Martha know that her husband was going to the court-house; and knowing that employment was the best means of settling the girl's mind, she told her of various things which she might do towards improving the state of the room, and the first of these was scrubbing the floor, for which purpose *the good* woman opened a basket which

hung upon her arm, and took out of it a new scrubbing brush, as she thought it possible that Martha might not have one at hand, and then having set the girl to work she went back to keep the shop during her husband's absence, taking little Willie with her to keep him out of harm's way; and the child was in no small degree delighted when he was seated on a high chair by Mrs. Burke's table pasting paper bags for her.

Martha was very busy all the morning, but still she could not help looking up anxiously every few minutes to see if there were any signs of Mr. Burke. The floor looked clean; the air was fresh and pure, the cupboard door was mended, and the cobwebs were swept off the ceiling; these were the first steps towards improvement, and Martha surveyed them with great satisfaction; she had just put some plates on the table, and got out something for the children's dinner when she heard footsteps at the door, and

Mr. Burke entered, followed by little Eddy.

The boy's head was bent very low, so that his sister could not see his face, and he walked over to the window and stood looking out of it.

"There he is, Martha," said the good-natured baker. "They've let him off with a caution as it's his first offence, and in consideration of his youth and weakness; and I think and hope that it will be his last."

"Thank you. Oh, I can't tell you how from my heart I thank you, for your goodness, Mr. Burke," said poor Martha, grasping his hand, but unable to say more.

He shook it heartily, and then muttering something about his wife wanting him, he hastily left the house. Somehow his eyes felt very dim for a few minutes afterwards; he would not have acknowledged how much he felt the forlorn condition of the little cripple boy, or the simple gratitude of the *sister.*

EDDY BROUGHT HOME.

Page 69.

Martha looked anxiously towards her brother after Mr. Burke left the room, but he kept his face pressed against the glass and would not look round.

She went over to him and touched his shoulder, but still he did not turn,—

"Eddy!" she said gently.

He only shook her hand off impatiently; but she was not thus easily to be repulsed, for she had prayed long and earnestly that she might be enabled to win back her little brother's love, and she felt sure that God would hear her prayer; so she spoke again very softly.

"Eddy, I did very wrong to make you go out the other day."

He did not answer.

"Have you left off loving me, Eddy?"

Still he was silent.

"I love you better than ever now," she went on, and her voice trembled.

He turned round suddenly and flung *himself into* her arms. "O Martha, Martha,"

he sobbed, "don't give me up, don't let them all hate me, it'll be so bad."

"We shall not, you know we shan't, Eddy."

"I want to go clean away and not see you any more. I'd like to die and go to mother."

"Hush, dear Eddy; do you think if God did let you die that you'd go and live with Him?"

A very faint "No!" was the answer,

"Why not?" asked Martha.

"Because I be a thief."

"Are you sorry you stole, Eddy?

"Yes, oh, yes;" and the little boy let his head fall upon her shoulder.

"Then God will forgive you," said Martha earnestly. "I've heard out of the Bible some words like these,—'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all *unrighteousness*."

"*Do* you think He'll forgive me, when

I've been so bad?" said Eddy, looking up.

"I know He will, don't you remember, mother used to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ, forgiving the thief who was nailed to the cross by His side; won't you ask Him, Eddy?"

"Yes."

"And ask Him to keep you from ever doing it again; won't you?"

"Yes."

"I want help as much as you do, Eddy boy. I know we can't keep on doing right, unless He keeps on helping us, so we must ask Him to teach us, and take care of us."

"O Martha, it was so bad this morning; I thought when they sent Joe to the Reformatory, they'd be sure to send me too; and I cried so, and I couldn't hardly speak, and I never looked up till they said I might go home; and the gentleman, he spoke so grave about my never stealing again; and *then Mr. Burke* brought me home."

"Thank God," whispered Martha.

"Is father very angry? will he beat me?" asked her little brother fearfully.

"No, Eddy, I don't think he will; but if he does you must bear it patiently."

At this moment the father's step was heard outside, and he entered accompanied by Dick and Lucy.

"Why, there's Eddy!" cried the little girl, as she caught sight of him.

A quick frown came on the father's forehead, but it passed away as he fixed a keen and piercing gaze upon his little boy. There was something in that small white face, with its wistful blue eyes and frightened look, that reminded David Wilson of his wife; and laying his hand on the child's shoulder he said sternly, but not harshly, "My chap, I had a mind to give you a hiding; but you've had a lesson, and I don't think you'll forget it, so I'll forgive you; and mind, you children, I mean this affair to be *dropped* amongst us; let it be a warning to

all of you, but I'll not have anything more *said* about it."

And that day *was* the turning-point in little Eddy's life. At night in his small garret, long after Willie was asleep, Eddy knelt by his little bed imploring pardon from his Saviour for the past; asking to have all his sins washed away in His blood; and to be given His Holy Spirit, to make him fit to live with Him for ever in heaven.

And the cripple's prayer was heard on high by Him who says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee;" and an answer of peace was sent down into his sorrowful little heart.

VII.

The Day of Trouble.

"Then fear not, poor and patient ones,
Who toil in suffering now;
God knows the struggle of your life,
And sees your anxious brow.

Fear not, though hungry, desolate,
Ye walk in darkness on,
And see no light; be patient still,
Your day of joy will dawn."

Thoughts in Verse.

THE sunshine had found its way into Martha's home; and it was pleasant to see the good which it began to accomplish there.

We have seen the first steps towards improvement, but Martha found the work slow and difficult; there was so much mischief to be undone, before any real good could be done.

However, she had a wise and faithful *friend* in Mrs. Burke, who put her in the

way of performing various household duties, of which she had formerly been ignorant. Ben was found to be a willing carpenter, and entered heartily into his sister's improvements; and they were rewarded for their work by their father's look of surprise, at the altered appearance of the room, and his hearty words of praise.

"Why, Martha, girl! things are looking up; this is cheerier than it's been for many a long day."

But not only the room was changed, but Martha herself, both outwardly and inwardly. Outwardly, for her dress, though very poor, was under Mrs. Burke's directions well washed and patched; and inwardly, for God's Holy Spirit had worked a change in her heart. "Old things were passing away;" her fretfulness, anger, laziness, and coldness; and, "all things were becoming new," for there were springing up within her the fruits of that blessed *Spirit which* are, "love, joy, peace," &c.

Eddy was altered too. It was touching to see the humility which was written in his face, and how for some time he shrunk from the rest of the family; but he clung to Martha, and lost no opportunity of doing little thoughtful acts of kindness to save her trouble.

Mrs. Burke took a great fancy to him, she pitied him at first, and then his quiet, humble manner won upon her warm heart, and she constantly had him with her, while she helped Martha very much by sending little Willie to a day-school.

But very often large black clouds arise, which for a time obscure the brightest sunshine and so it was in Martha's home. It was after she had, "suffered a while," that she was to be "made perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled."

It had been cleaning-day, but the cleaning was done, and Martha had seated herself, with her work near the open window, for it was the summer time, and was looking *with admiration* at the beautiful blossoms

on a geranium, which Mrs. Burke had given to Eddy, and which the little boy had placed in the window, that Martha might see it when she was sewing.

The cripple was sitting near her, reading to her the last number of a magazine, which had been lent to him by his kind friends. He had just finished the description of a happy home circle, when he paused, and looking up in his sister's face, he said,—

"Martha, shall we ever be like that?"

"I hope so," replied his sister with a bright smile.

"I thought people couldn't be very happy unless they were rich."

"O Eddy, dear, you know better. The Saviour didn't think that, because He made all the poorest people happy; it's His love, I think, that makes us so, and we can all have that."

"Does father love Him!"

Martha sighed, she very much feared *that he did not.*

"Father doesn't never read the Bible, nor go to church, Martha."

"We will hope and pray that he may some day," said Martha.

"I wonder who that is coming in; it isn't time for Ben."

"It's a man's step, who can it be?" but not much time was left for wondering, for a man from the warehouse where their father worked, hastily entered the room, saying, "You must come instantly, your father has had a terrible fall, and is dangerously hurt."

Martha sprang from her seat with a cry, "Father, *father* did you say? oh, take me quick; he is dead, and you will not tell me."

"Hush, my girl, you must be more quiet; if you put yourself in such a fuss, you'll do more harm than good; your father is hurt very badly, but you'll do no good by screaming so; just put on your bonnet and come along with me."

Tremblingly Martha obeyed, her face growing paler with every moment's delay; but just as she was leaving the room, Eddy slipped to her side, and laying his hand on hers, whispered, "GOD says, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble.' I'll do that, Martha, because I'm of no other use, but I know that will do some good."

"Do, dear," replied Martha, as she kissed him, "and then Eddy, go to Mrs. Burke and tell her, and ask her to come to me."

Quickly she followed her guide to the narrow street, where the great warehouses towered storey upon storey above her head. They paused at the entrance of one of them, and entered the yard, where poor David Wilson lay, stretched on some sacks of wool. He was groaning terribly, and Martha could not restrain a violent burst of tears as she saw the agony he was enduring. Kneeling down beside him, she took his hand and then raising his head made him lean against her; *this* seemed to give him some small

relief, for opening his eyes, he smiled faintly at his daughter, murmuring,—

"That's better, don't fret, Sarah!" (Sarah had been the name of his wife.)

"Will he die?" asked Martha, looking up imploringly in the faces of the men who stood near.

"Don't know," was the reply. "We've sent for a doctor, but he's long a coming."

"His leg's broken, I think, and there seems something the matter with his side," said another.

"Oh, but he is dying—look—look!" said Martha, as she pointed with terror to his face, over which an ashy paleness was creeping, and the hand within hers became cold and lifeless.

"Father, father," she cried; but he did not answer, and his head lay powerless on his daughter's shoulder.

"He is dead," she almost screamed. "Oh, what shall I do?" and in a moment there rushed into her mind all the pain and lone-

liness of orphanhood; she fancied herself bereft of a father's care, left unprovided for with all her young brothers; and then what would become of her father? where would his soul be? Could she look forward to meeting him again? and was she never to hear his voice any more? was she to be alone, utterly alone?

In the bitterness of her sorrow, she forgot the scene around her, and bowed her head over the insensible form which she supported.

"Martha, my child, my poor child," said Mrs. Burke's kind voice by her side.

She raised her face, and her good friend started at the sight of the fixed despair written upon it, as she cried—"O Mrs. Burke, he is dead!—he is dead!"

"No, dear, I trust not, he has fainted from the sharpness of the pain; but let me support him while you fetch a little water."

Martha obeyed, and by the time she returned, the doctor had come, and her father had recovered consciousness.

"It is a bad accident," said the doctor; "he had better be put on a stretcher and taken to the Infirmary."

"Oh, no, no!" pleaded Martha; "do let us have him at home. I'll nurse him so well! Oh, please do."

The doctor looked inquiringly at Mrs. Burke, who gently put her hand on Martha's shoulder and said, "It will be far better for him to go to the Infirmary, my dear."

"Oh, no, no!" said poor Martha, "I must have him at home."

Mrs. Burke looked puzzled for a moment, and then said, "Martha, I've often given you advice before, and you've taken it; won't you do so now, when I tell you that it would be for your father's good to go to the Infirmary."

Martha did not reply, and the doctor went away to order a stretcher.

"Well, Martha?" said her friend, after a few minutes had passed, during which the

groans of the suffering man had been the only sound which had broken the silence.

"Do as you like," she said, turning away her head; and as her father was lifted up, she stood wistfully gazing after him until the stretcher and the men who bore it were out of sight.

"Now, Martha dear," said Mrs. Burke, putting the girl's trembling arm within her own, "you must come home with me for a little while."

Martha knew not, and cared not where she was going, and did not resist Mrs. Burke's wish; so the kind woman brought her into the quiet, little back parlour, which had been Martha's refuge in all kind of troubles, and making her sit down, she talked to her, kindly and soothingly, about her father's accident. But Martha hardly answered her, and Mrs. Burke soon saw that the girl was vexed.

"Martha, my dear, you think I was hard on you *just now*."

"No; I suppose you thought I wasn't fit to nurse."

"Not a bit of it, my dear; but listen awhile. Your father's accident is a very severe one; I'm afraid his illness will be long and serious; and, in the first place, are you capable of meeting the expense of it, now that his wages are stopped?"

Martha shook her head, and Mrs. Burke went on. "There will be medicine, and lotions, and good food, and various kinds of comforts which you have not got, and which he will have in the Infirmary. Then, again, there is the noise of the children; you know you can't keep them like mice for a long time."

"No; it would be very hard."

"Well, my dear, now there's a sister of Mr. Burke's, whose husband was very ill, and she would have him at home; and so it went on, until I went to see them, and then how do you think I found them? The poor man was very ill, and the wife

didn't know much about nursing, she did what she could, poor soul; but while she was attending to him, her little children were going to rack and ruin, and so were all her household concerns. I went into the sick man's room; nothing was nice there. The air was close and confined, the window never was opened, the bed was untidy and uncomfortable,—everything wore a look of discomfort that was very trying; the poor man had no nourishing food; his wife said she couldn't afford it when there were so many mouths to feed, and so he was not regaining his strength. Poor things! my heart ached for them, and we did what we could; but think how much better off that man would have been in the Infirmary!"

"Yes," said Martha.

"There your father will be tended by an experienced nurse, have the best medical attendance, get everything he wants to *make him well*, and he will be about again

in half the time that he would have been getting well at home. Are you vexed still, my girl?"

"No," said Martha, throwing her arms for an instant round Mrs. Burke's neck, and then she added, "I must go home; the children will want me."

"Well, my child, I think you'll want something to do now; so, if you are able, I can give you some needle-work to be at in spare moments; and I'd like you to let me have Eddy for a bit; I've a fancy for that boy, and I'd take care of him."

"Thank you," said Martha gratefully, and then she hurried home.

The cloud was dark; but still there was a rainbow of comfort to brighten it.

VIII.

"Clear Shining after Rain."

"Put thou thy trust in God,
In duty's path go on;
Walk in his strength with faith and hope,
So shall thy work be done.

Through waves, and clouds, and storms,
His power will clear thy way;
Wait thou his time—the darkest night
Shall end in brightest day."

ND Martha waited with patience and trustful hope for the time when God should see fit to drive away the dark clouds, and let the sunshine again into her home.

Six months passed away, and a new year came, with its untrodden path, its hidden cup of joys and sorrows.

It was the evening of New Year's Day, and there was joy everywhere; none of the

sadness which is so much connected with the evening before was mixed with it. The old year had passed away with all its sorrows, its sins, and its cares; and now there was hope to brighten the unknown future in nearly every heart. Solemnity there was, or ought to have been, in the thought of the responsibilities and uncertainties of the new portion of time allotted to each human being,—and such was the feeling in Martha's heart, as she heard the merry clatter and laughter of the happy group around her; and though she joined heartily in it, her mind seemed to be lifted above it all, and inwardly she thanked God for His mercies to her, and prayed that His presence might enlighten and bless her home through the year that was coming.

It certainly was a pleasant sight, that joyous party. Martha's father sat in an arm-chair, which had been lent by Mrs. Burke. He had quite recovered from his *accident*, and was going back to work the

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Page 80.

next day. Willie was on his knee, neatly and comfortably dressed. Eddy, who was now regularly employed in Mrs. Burke's shop, was sitting on a low stool near the fire, turning over the leaves of a nice copy of the "Pilgrim's Progress," of which his friends had made him a present that day. Dick and Lucy were roasting chestnuts between the hot bars, burning their fingers in their attempts to pull them out; while Ben was cutting out a little boat for Willie. Martha was spreading the tea-table, and seeing that everything was in readiness, for they were expecting visitors that evening.

"I wonder when they'll come," said Lucy, pulling her fingers out quickly from the hot ashes, into which the last chestnut had fallen.

"They ought to be here now," said her father.

"Eddy says they've baked a big cake for us, father, ever so much bigger than my head," whispered Willie confidentially.

"I told you not to tell," said Eddy, giving him a little poke with the end of his crutch.

"Oh, father won't tell," replied Willie.

"But I heard what you said," put in Ben.

"Well, here they come, so there's not much longer to keep the secret," said David Wilson, as he stood up to welcome his guests. "I'm glad to see you, Mrs. Burke; it's kind of you to be so friendly."

Mrs. Burke was too busy kissing the children to notice this remark, and soon they were all seated at tea; and Martha saw from her friend's face how pleased she was with the order and cleanliness of everything.

After tea they had some games, and then Mr. Burke made a great dish of snap-dragon for the children, and looked as pleased as they did, while he listened to their peals of laughter.

This amusement was followed by singing

for Martha, Dick, and Eddy had sweet clear voices, and sung a great many songs very well.

"What's that you were singing last Sunday?" asked their father.

Martha coloured a little, and hesitated, for she did not know that he had overheard them, but Eddy answered,—

"It was a hymn, father."

"Sing it now."

"Which was it?" asked Martha brightly, "for we sung a good many."

"I don't know, but I mind that I heard it long ago, and the only words in my head are :—

'Worthy the Lamb, our lips reply,
For He was slain for us.'"

"Oh, I know, I know!" cried Dick, "it's the one I like best, because I can sing loud in it,—

'Come let us join our cheerful songs,'"

Mrs. Burke smiled at the good reason

which Dick assigned for liking it, and then they all joined in singing the words which are so well known, and so heartily beloved throughout our land.

A long silence ensued, which was broken by David Wilson saying thoughtfully,—

"I haven't heard that since I was a boy in church with my mother; ah, she was a good woman!"

"Now we must go," said Mrs. Burke, standing up, "we've had a very pleasant evening, Mr. Wilson."

"You needn't go so early, surely?" said David Wilson cordially.

"Yes, we must. Much obliged to you all the same; but my Thomas likes to read a chapter of the Bible, and pray with the family before we go to bed, and we must not keep the maid-servant and the boys up any longer;" and with a kindly "Good-night," she parted from them; but as she kissed Martha, she whispered, "God bless you with His choicest blessings through the

year that is coming, my child; may He be your best Friend and constant Guide."

Martha squeezed her friend's hand tightly in answer, and then the baker and his wife went away.

"I'm glad you coaxed me into stopping at home this evening, Patty," said Ben, "I've had a jolly time of it, and I don't believe I should have been better off with those chaps who asked me to go out with them."

"I don't think you would," said his sister, looking up at him quietly.

"This room is much nicer than it used to be; it doesn't seem like the same at all," he remarked after a few minutes.

"You've helped to make it nice, Ben," said Martha.

"Not much, Patty; but I'll do my best to keep it so."

All this time David Wilson had been sitting thoughtfully leaning his elbows on the table, and his head on his hands; at *length he looked* up and said,—

"Children, listen to me. While I wa ill I thought a good bit, and now I wan to tell you something. We've not bee living as we should; we've been forgettin God, children; and not living as if heave was before us. Let us change; it is hig time we should. We have many mercies God has spared me still to work for you He has raised up kind friends for us; an last, not least, He has given me this goo daughter, and you this good sister," and h laid his broad hand upon Martha's hea and then added reverently, "Let us try t thank Him in our lives. Willie, my la get down Martha's Bible."

Martha's eyes kindled with pleasure, an she listened with an overflowing hear while her father read a psalm, and the kneeling down repeated the Lord's Praye

Quietly and gratefully she went t bed, at the end of that day of happiness but ere she did so she poured out h heartfelt thanksgiving to her Father

heaven, and implored that all her sins and short-comings might be forgiven for her Saviour's sake; and that she might receive fresh supplies of strength and help for the future.

The clouds have passed away, and God be thanked for the sunshine that has entered "Martha's Home!"

THE LONG NIGHT.

IT was the close of a warm day in the latter part of August, and little Franz Hoffmuster was playing in the cottage door with his baby sister Karine. His older sister, Therese, was busy clearing away the evening meal; and his brother, Robert, was industriously carving curious wooden spoons, and knives and forks, to sell to travellers whom his father might guide over the mountains: for you must know that these four children lived in a little Swiss chalet, or cottage, at the foot of some famous mountains, and when little Franz lifted his eyes, he did not see a row of houses, three storeys *high,* but instead of these, high mountains

stretched their grand old heads up into the very sky. The mother of these little Swiss children had died more than a year ago, and as they were very poor, Therese—who was only twelve years old—had been the little housekeeper ever since.

Now, when I tell you that the father had gone to guide some travellers over the mountains, and would not be back till the next day, I think you will feel quite well acquainted with this pleasant family, and will like to hear a little more about them. It was sunset, and Franz, quite tired of play, leaned his head against Therese's knee, and fixed his gentle blue eyes upon the glittering mountain tops.

Do you remember, Franz," said Therese, "what the little English boy's father said the night he was here?"

"No; what *did* he say?"

"Why, we were looking at the sunset, and it was just as beautiful as it is to-night, for it seemed as if all the mountain

tops were on fire, and you could imagine the strangest things. At last I thought it must be like some of the grand, far-away cities, of which the travellers so often talk. So I went up to the good gentleman, and said, 'Does it look like London, sir?' I do not think he heard me, for he just kept his eyes fixed upon the mountains, and he looked as if he saw something very wonderful a great way off. And while I was trying to think what it was, he stretched out his hands so slowly, and said softly—'*Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.*' These were the very words, for I learned them afterwards from my little book."

"Well," broke in little Franz, breathlessly, "what happened then? Did you see any door or gate, and did any king come in?"

"No," said Therese thoughtfully. "I could not think what the good gentleman meant, for he only looked straight into the

beautiful red sunset, and I had seen it just the same often before. But he looked so long and so earnestly, that I began to be afraid that something was going to happen. So I took hold of his hand, and said, 'Please, sir, do *you* see any gate, and will the king soon come through?' I had to ask him two or three times before he heard me, and then he looked down so kindly, and smiled with his eyes, but did not say anything at first. So I asked again, 'Is it your king, sir?' 'Yes, little Therese, *my* king,' said he. 'Is it the King of England?' I asked. 'No;' and he smiled a little more. 'The King of France?' 'No.' 'Ah, the King of Sweden, then?' 'No, little Therese,' said he, 'it is the "King of Glory."' 'And where is "Glory," sir?' I asked. 'Is it far away behind the mountains, and is it very near England?' 'No,' said he, smiling more and more; 'it is no nearer England than Switzerland. It is in heaven; and all who love and serve the Lord Jesus,

strive always to do right for his sake, are getting ready for the time when the King will come and take them with him to his glory, and that time is coming nearer every day.'"

"Well, sister," said Franz slowly, "I tried to do right, for Jesus' sake to-day. Neighbour Ulrich was just going up the mountain with his mule and a heavy load of bread and fruit, when the mule fell, and everything tumbled over the ground. Oh, how angry he was! and when I first ran up he struck at me with his whip, for he thought I only meant to trouble him."

"The cross old fellow!" interrupted Robert. "I would have thrown everything over the rocks if I had been there."

"Ah, no," said the gentle Therese; "then you would have been just as bad as he. I hope you were kind, Franz?"

"Yes," said Franz, "after a while. But at first all sorts of bad thoughts came tumbling into my head, and I wanted to call *him* an ugly name. But I held my breath,

just as you told me, sister, and shut my teeth hard, and thought of the King of Glory; and pretty soon I felt sorry for him again, and helped him till everything was picked up."

"And what did he say then?" said Therese.

"Oh! he said I was not so bad as some boys."

"The old curmudgeon!" cried Robert. "Not so bad as some boys, indeed! Were those all the thanks you got?"

"Well," said Therese soothingly, "he is a poor, lonely man, and has no children to love him, and make him smile. I am very glad Franz helped him."

"Do you think I came any nearer to glory?" whispered Franz, with great earnestness.

"I hope you did," replied Therese; "but Robert must not be left behind. We must ask the great King to help us to take him with us, and to-morrow we will all go on together."

"*The gates* are shutting up now, and

they not, sister?" said little Franz, as the beautiful rosy light paled in the west, and the old mountain tops stood cold and solemn against the clear sky.

"Let us go in," added Robert. "The night wind is cold from the ravines, and I'm sleepy and tired."

"And I," said little Franz, rubbing his misty blue eyes.

Karine was already sleeping with her fat hand under her rosy cheek, and in a short time the cottage door was bolted, and all these little children, snug in their beds, were on their way to dream-land.

Therese had not slept very long, when she felt a sudden shock, as if something had struck the little chalet, and made it tremble all over.

"What is that?" murmured little Franz dreamily.

"Is it morning already?" sighed poor *tired* Robert.

But Therese did not know what it could be; and while she was still trying to think, her heavy eyelids drooped, and she was soon fast asleep.

Two or three times she awoke again, and wondered if it were not almost morning; but it was dark as midnight, and she tried to compose herself again. But at last she became so broad awake, that she sat up in bed, and tried to look around the room. "It must be a very dark night," she thought to herself, "for almost always the stars give a little light. I wonder how I happened to wake so early?"

Just then little Franz spoke in a very weary voice: "Dear Therese, when *will* it be morning? It is the very longest night I ever knew!"

"So I think," cried Robert. "I've been awake half a dozen times, and now I mean to get up."

"Oh, no," pleaded Franz; "let us tell *stories till daylight*."

So Therese, Robert, and Franz, each told a long story; and just as they finished, Karine, waking up, cried loudly for her breakfast.

"I don't wonder that she is hungry," said Franz, "for I am half-starved, and cold too."

"Ah," sighed Therese, "if we only had something to get a light." But their father kept all such things in a little cupboard in the wall, and had taken the key with him.

So Therese searched till she found some milk for Karine, and some black bread, which she gave to her brothers.

Then, as they could no longer sleep, they all dressed as well as they could in the dark.

"I will go out," said Robert, "and see if I can discover any signs of morning."

So he took down the heavy bar, when, to his surprise, the door flew open, and he found himself upon the floor, half buried in some cold substance!

"Oh, Therese! Franz!" cried Robert, "come help me."

"What can it be," exclaimed all three, as they helped him upon his feet.

"Why, this is snow," cried little Franz, putting a handful to his mouth.

"How can that be?" exclaimed Therese, "when it was so pleasant a few hours ago?"

For a few moments there was a profound silence; then Robert gave a quick, sharp cry.

"O Therese! could it be an avalanche?"

"No, no," said Therese in a trembling voice, "that cannot be, or the roof would have fallen in, and crushed us to death."

"No," said Robert; "I have heard father say that small ones sometimes fall so lightly that sleeping families have never been disturbed. But then, *I* remember a noise in the night."

"And I," said Therese.

"And I," echoed frightened little Franz.

"What can we do?" asked Therese as firmly as she could.

"Will not father dig us out?" sobbed Franz.

"I'm afraid he cannot find us."

"Well," said Robert, "I will try and dig through to the light;" and finding an old shovel, he hurried to the door and began to work manfully.

But it was all in the dark, and the snow fell over him till he was half dead with cold and fatigue. Several times he tried again, but as soon as he dug a little away the snow was sure to fall down and fill it all up, so at last he came in, saying despairingly,—

"Well, Therese, if father does not find us, we must lie down here in the dark."

"If I could only see you, sister," said Franz, in a choking voice, "I should not mind it so much."

"Let us hold each other's hands," proposed Therese; and they all huddled together *by little* Karine.

At first they were quite cheerful, and said often, "Oh, father will certainly find us."

But the long hours dragged on, and all was still as the grave. Poor Karine cried very hard, for she could not understand why it was so dark, and she could not see the sweet smile of her little sister mother.

But you would be very tired if I should tell you all that these children said and did through this long night—how often they prayed to the King of heaven for help—how kind and gentle they tried to be, and how they denied themselves food that little Karine might not be hungry. But at last there was nothing left to eat. Karine was too tired and weak to cry any more, and only once in a while made a little grieving moan. Robert had not spoken for a long time,—not since he had said wildly, "O Therese, Therese, I cannot, cannot die!" and threw himself sobbing upon his bed. But little Franz, who was becoming very *ill, said* some very strange things, so that

Therese could not help weeping, when he whispered sadly—

"All dark; no sun, no moon, no stars. Sister, *when will* the King of Glory come in?"

Suddenly a sound broke the stillness—a sound upon the roof! "What is that?" cried Robert, starting eagerly to his feet.

There were several heavy blows, and then a ray of bright, beautiful sunshine came flashing through a hole in the wall, and a voice exclaimed—

"Little Franz Hoffmuster, are you there?"

Franz could not speak, but Robert gave a wild shout and hurrah. "Yes, yes, neighbour Ulrich, here we all are!" and in a few moments the room was filled with kind neighbours, who bore the famished children out into the clear light and air, where their father, who had dropped down from fatigue, was awaiting them with great anxiety. I cannot tell you of all the tears and embraces that were showered upon these children. But it would have done your heart

good to see cross old neighbour Ulrich holding little Franz, and feeding him as tenderly as if he had been his mother. And oh, how beautiful the world looked to them all!

"My dear children," said their father, "God has been very kind to you, and has saved you from very great peril; but next to Him you must thank kind neighbour Ulrich, who has given himself no rest, but when others were discouraged, has always said—'Work on! work on! there is a boy worth saving down here!'"

Robert blushed, as he remembered his unkind words, but Therese looked at Franz with a sweet smile.

Little Franz turned and kissed the rough cheek of neighbour Ulrich, then clasping his hands, looked up to the clear sky and said softly—

"Help me always to please thee, dear King of Glory."

LITTLE AGNES GREEN.

WHICH of my little readers are not older than ten years? Come and I shall tell you a story of what happened to six poor children, all under that age, about fifty years ago. It will be a good lesson for us all, to see what God helped one brave little girl to do.

Agnes Green was nine years old, and had five brothers and sisters younger than herself. Their father was a respectable working man, and they all lived in a small cottage in a wild valley of the mountains of Westmoreland. If you take a good map of England, and look in the north for Westmoreland, you may see Grasmere

marked. It is the name both of a beautiful valley and of a lake and village in it. Beyond this is a smaller valley called Easdale, quite surrounded by high hills, with just one narrow opening into Grasmere. Here, in a lonely cottage, the Greens lived. In fair weather the older children could go to the Grasmere school. Their mother did all she could to keep them neat and comfortable, but she could not afford to have a servant, and so little Agnes was taught to do many more things than are common at her age. She was a very good and clever child, and learned to milk the cow, mend the fire, cook the dinner, nurse the little ones—do all that was possible for her age and strength. Which of you are at all like her? You may say, perhaps, that there is no need for *you* to learn such things. But you cannot begin too soon to be useful. Had poor Agnes been as helpless as some of you, she and her brothers and sisters must

have died of cold and hunger in the sad time I am going to tell you of.

One winter day, Mr. and Mrs. Green had business which made them very anxious to go to a farm-house at some distance from Easdale. There was snow on the ground, but the morning was fine; and to save a long road round by Grasmere, they determined to take a short cut right over the mountains, which they had sometimes done before. So Mrs. Green made everything straight for the day, bidding Agnes take good care of the little ones, and expect her and their father back in the evening before dark; and then both parents kissed the children, and set out on the journey, from which they were never to return. They got safe to the farm, where a number of people were assembled at a sale, did their business, and said they would go home by the same way, although many of their friends advised them not to attempt it, for more snow was evidently coming on.

Evening came, and Agnes made a bright peat fire, which all the children gathered round, expecting every minute to hear their parents' voices at the door. But it began to get dark and late, and still they did not come. Agnes had often heard of the dangers of snow among the hills, and she soon got uneasy. Her little brothers were afraid too, though they hardly knew for what. They listened to every sound of the wind; they started at times, thinking it was their father's step; but all in vain. At last Agnes said they must go to bed, and as they had all been well trained to be obedient, they came and said their prayers at her knees, and then went to rest with fearful hearts.

Next morning, when Agnes looked out, she saw there had been a heavy fall of snow, so that the cottage was almost shut up, and it would be impossible for them even to reach the nearest neighbours. And, oh! there was no sign of their dear father

or mother's return! She had a lingering hope that they might have been detained all night at Grasmere; but her fears were far greater. It was, indeed, a terrible situation for six little children to be left in, and her mind being advanced beyond her years, she felt all the danger. But she knew where to look for help; and He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, heard the cry of this forsaken child, and gave her wisdom and ability for her time of need, as truly as he gave to Solomon on the throne of Israel, long ages before.

She wound up the clock, dressed the infants, and made the older children come and say their prayers as usual. She knew that their greatest danger would be that of starvation, should the storm last long. Their mother had left plenty milk in the house, and Agnes scalded it carefully, to prevent it turning sour. Then she examined the meal chest, and finding there was not *much* in it, she put all except the babies

(these were little twins) on a short allowance of porridge, but baked some flour cakes as a kind of treat. Then, as the day went on, she took courage to open the door, and with her brothers got as far as the peat-stalk at the cottage side, and among them they managed to carry within doors as many peats as would keep up the fire for a week. She examined the potatoes, which were buried among withered ferns; but as there were not many, only brought in enough for a day, afraid of heat spoiling them.

Then she thought of the cow, and made her way to the byre. She milked the poor animal, but got very little from her, and had great difficulty in pulling down hay out of the loft for her to eat; besides, it was getting dark, and poor Agnes felt very frightened and unhappy. So she was thankful to get into the cottage again, and, barring the door, she put the infants comfortably to bed, and nursed the

to sit up with her until midnight, in the faint hope that some token of their dear parents not being lost might reach them before then. It was a wild night of wind and snow, and though the little watchers sometimes fancied they heard voices in the stormy blast, when the lull came, all was silence. Agnes did what she could to keep the snow from drifting in below the door or through a chink of the window, and also to make sure that the fire would not go out, and then they sadly went to bed.

Next morning the snow-drifts were higher than ever. There was no possibility of going out; but the brave little mother —for so we may call her—still kept her family quiet and comfortable—never omitting the morning and evening prayers, and struggling hard against her own fears and sorrows.

At last, either on the third or fourth *day,* I am not sure which, the snow-drifts

had changed in such a way that Agnes thought it might be possible to try the road to Grasmere. Her brothers went with her part of the way, till they saw she was safe, and then went back to the little ones, and Agnes got on to the nearest cottage. When the poor weeping child told her sad story, the good people were overcome with astonishment, distress, and sympathy. The news spread like lightning through Grasmere, that Mr. and Mrs. Green had not been seen by their children since the day of the sale at Langdale. Before an hour had passed, all the men in the parish gathered together, arranged the best plans for a search, and then dispersed over the mountains. In the state of the weather, it was a dangerous duty, and great was the anxiety of their wives and mothers left at home. The men returned at night, without any success, and this went on for several days. They willingly gave up all *other work*, and morning after morning set

out on this toilsome, sorrowful pilgrimage, while the poor orphans, of course, were most tenderly cared for now. At length some one thought of taking sagacious dogs up the hills to help the search; and on the fifth day, about noon, a loud shout, echoed by the rocks, and repeated from one band of men to another, told the women in the valley that the bodies were found. Poor John Green lay at the foot of a precipice, over which he had fallen; his wife, whom he had wrapped in his own great coat, was found above. They had wandered far out of the right course, and must have died in the darkness of that first stormy night, while their children were watching for them round the fire at home.

They had been such respectable, worthy people, that their loss was greatly lamented, and rich and poor were alike desirous to help and care for the orphans. You will ask what became of Agnes afterwards. I *cannot* tell you. If she is alive now, she

must be an old woman; but she can never have forgotten the story of her parents' death, and I trust she has never forgotten how the Father of the fatherless was then her helper and protector.

Let me point out only two lessons from this sad tale. One is, that if God be with us, we need fear no evil. Can you think of anything more dreadful than to be left shut up in the snow-storm, as these children were, with their parents dying on the wild hills above? Yet God did not forsake them. He sent no angel, he wrought no miracle for their deliverance; but he gave wisdom and courage to the little girl, in her time of sore distress and danger. And so every one of you, if you trust in Him, may be sure of finding the promise fulfilled—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Another lesson is, the happiness of being loving towards one another, and obedient to those older than yourselves. How true

children been like many others, quarrelsome and unruly, what a sad difference it would have made. But they obeyed their young sister as if she had been their mother; and so the days of captivity were far less hard to bear for all.

Think of these things when you remember the story of little Agnes Green, and pray and try to be like her.

GRANDMOTHER'S STORY.

HARRY and Bessie went to spend the afternoon with their old grandmother. She was glad to have the children for company; and they were equally glad to go to see her, for besides the pleasure of drinking tea with her, grandmother was such a famous hand at telling nice stories, that both Harry and Bessie always enjoyed their visits.

This afternoon, as soon as they were seated, and had talked for a few minutes, Bessie, who was an industrious little girl, took her thimble out of her pocket, and began *to mend* some clothes for her grand-

mother; and presently Harry got his knife, and was very busy cutting some wood into pegs. His father sold these pegs at a shop where he was employed in the next town, and Harry had the money towards buying a new suit for Sundays.

It was not long, you may be sure, before one of the children said, "Now, grandmother, won't you tell us a story, please?" And the kind old grandmother, willing to oblige them, said she would, and that it should be about a little boy who made clothes-pegs for sale.

"About *me*, grandmother?" asked Harry.

"About *you*, Harry!" exclaimed Bessie; "I should think not, indeed; what have *you* ever done that is worth putting into a story?"

Grandmother smiled. "No, Harry," she said, "it is not about you. The name of my boy was John, and he lived more *than* two hundred miles away from here.

His mother was a poor widow woman, and she had several little children younger than he. How she managed to get a living at all, I don't know, but they seldom had quite enough to eat, and sometimes they were very badly off indeed. John was but a little fellow—not so big as you, Harry—when he learned to make pegs, and to carry them about to people's doors to sell. He did not earn much in this way. Sometimes he returned at night with scarcely a penny; now and then, however, he did better; and the smallest trifle was of use to them.

"But one winter it happened that food was very dear, and money very scarce. John's mother, too, became very weak and poorly; and at length her head ached so violently that she could not bear to lift it from the pillow. It was with a heavy heart that poor John left her, and set out to try whether he could sell enough pegs to *procure a loaf* of bread with, for there

was scarcely a crust in the house, and not a particle of tea. John was a good boy, and as he walked sorrowfully along, he prayed to God to help them out of their trouble, and to send them something to eat. He had scarcely finished praying, when his foot struck against something, and looking to the ground, he saw a purse of money."

"Capital!" said Harry, "I am so glad."

"So am I," said Bessie; "how soon God answered his prayer, grandmother!"

"So John thought, Bessie. He picked up the purse with a joyful heart; but then he thought, 'Is this really mine? Somebody must have lost it. Ought I to keep it without making any inquiry about it?'

"Looking up, he saw at a few yards' distance an old gentleman walking leisurely along. The road was a very long one, and as there was no one else in sight, the purse most likely belonged to him. 'But what if it does?' something seemed to whisper in John's ear; 'he can do without it better

than you can; he has a good hat and a handsome greatcoat on; no doubt he has plenty more money at home, and will hardly miss this. And think how much good it would do your mother! It would buy all you want, and very likely keep you from going into the workhouse, as you will otherwise be obliged to do. Now, don't be foolish; put it it your pocket; nobody will know.'

"John was sorely tempted, and he almost yielded; but he knew what he ought to do, and he looked to God for strength. The next minute he was running as fast as he could to overtake the old gentleman."

"Hurrah!" cried Harry.

"It seems a pity, though," sighed little Bessie, "that it wasn't right for him to keep it."

"'If you please, sir, said John, breathlessly—'if you please, sir, have you dropped a purse?'

"The old gentleman looked surprised,

and was going to say, No; but he put his hand first into his pocket, and found that his purse was not there. 'Yes, indeed, I have,' he said. 'Have you found it, my little man? it is a dark blue one.'

"John immediately produced it. 'Then here it is, sir; I have just picked it up in the road.'

"'I must have drawn it out with my handkerchief, I suppose, for I had not missed it. You are an honest lad, and I am much obliged to you. Let me see, what must I give you for bringing it back to me?'

"'Nothing, sir, thank you,' answered John; 'but if you would buy a few of these pegs, sir, I should be very glad.'

"'Well, I don't understand much about pegs,' replied the old gentleman, good-humouredly; 'but I live close by here, and if you will come in with me, I will speak to my housekeeper about them.'

"John followed the old gentleman in-

doors; and the housekeeper soon agreed to buy all the pegs that he had, and to pay him double the price for them that he usually got. She also gave him some cold meat and bread; and while he was eating that, the old gentleman asked him about his nome, and his mother, until he knew all their difficulties. He told John that he would call and see his mother in the course of the day. He kept his promise; and from that day the poor widow never wanted a friend. The old gentleman had plenty of money, and he liked to help deserving people; so he not only supplied John's mother with money for present need, but, as soon as she was stronger, he stocked a nice little shop for her, by means of which she was able to provide for herself and her family.

"So John's prayer was answered, you see, although not exactly in the way that you expected."

"And what became of John, grandmother?"

"When he was old enough, the old gentleman apprenticed him to a carpenter; and he grew up to be a steady, pious young man; and he has got children and grandchildren of his own now."

"He must be an old man," said Harry.

"Yes, he is; his hair is quite gray; but he never forgets God's goodness to him when he was a boy."

"How I should like to see him, grandmother!" said Bessie, looking up from her work.

"Should you, Bessie? Well, your wish may soon be gratified, for I expect he will be with us at tea-time. Look! there he is, coming in at the gate."

Bessie jumped up from her work; Harry tumbled down his wood-basket; both rushed eagerly to the window.

"Why, Bessie," exclaimed Harry, "*it's grandfather!*"